

# NEW SOLAR HOMES PARTNERSHIP

## HOME BUILDER'S CASE STUDY

### Clarum Homes



### PROJECT

#### *Vista Montaña - Watsonville, CA*

The Clarum Homes community, Vista Montaña in Watsonville, California, is one of the nation's largest energy efficient Zero Energy<sup>\*</sup> home communities. *Every home in the Vista Montaña community is an Enviro-Home™, Clarum's energy efficient and environmentally friendly home distinction.* Known primarily as an agricultural town, Watsonville is making a gradual shift to becoming a suburb of Santa Cruz. The Vista Montaña subdivision targets first-time and move-up buyers who have been priced out of Santa Cruz neighborhoods, but maintain the same prevailing "earth-friendly" mindset of those residents. Vista Montaña includes 177 single-family homes, 80 townhouses, and 132 apartments. Initially prices started at \$379,000, but some units sold for as much as \$600,000. The all-solar development opened in August 2003 and sold out within one year.

### MAKING THE DECISION

*John Suppes, founder and president of Clarum Homes, did not hesitate when it came to building solar homes.*

"I was first introduced to the solar and green building methods at a national home builder conference in Atlanta in 1999," Mr. Suppes says. I came back and immediately started incorporating the ideas into our communities so that *we could offer more efficient homes and give our home buyers the opportunity to actually produce electricity in the midst of this energy crisis we are facing.* I feel very strongly about the need to promote sustainable energy sources."

With a combined goal of bringing the value of solar electric power, green building products and energy efficiency to homeowners, Clarum, AstroPower and ConSol designed and built these homes that will serve as a benchmark within both the community and the industry.

### CHALLENGE

A key challenge for Clarum was to make the energy efficient homes affordable and marketable. Clarum has found that in most cases it's not the energy efficient features that sell buyers. Educating buyers about energy efficiency is key to making the sale.

### SOLUTION

*The homes are selling faster than Clarum Homes can build them.* According to Mr. Suppes, owners of homes where energy efficient and solar were standard features report substantially lower energy bills than neighbors who bought less efficient homes. They also said they were able to resell their homes at a greater profit and were more likely to buy the same home if they had to choose again.

### PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Clarum partnered with ConSol and others to develop its Enviro-Home™ package of energy efficiency and solar power features, designed to reduce homeowner energy bills by 60-90 percent.

\* Clarum Homes is part of the Department of Energy's Zero Energy Home program. A Zero Energy Home combines state-of-the-art, energy-efficient construction and appliances with commercially available renewable energy systems such as solar water heating and solar electricity. This combination can result in net zero energy consumption from the utility provider. The Zero Energy Home program formed the foundation for the New Solar Homes Partnership.

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"You never expect to have a new house for a first home and then to have, on top of that, a home so technologically superior is pretty exciting."

— Robin M., Vista Montaña resident

*Each Enviro-Home™ has been professionally designed, certified and inspected to reduce energy consumption and use sustainable resources while improving comfort.* The program has also earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR® seal, ConSol's ComfortWise designation and the California Building Industry Institute's California Green Builder certification.

In addition to a solar electric home power system, each Enviro-Home™ in the Vista Montaña community *features a tankless on-demand water heater and a high efficiency furnace as standard features.* The homes also feature foam-wrapped building envelopes, increased insulation, radiant roof barriers, advanced HVAC technology, tightly sealed ducts, and low-E energy efficient windows. Ceiling fans, fluorescent light bulbs, water conserving plumbing fixtures and water conserving landscaping are also incorporated, providing home owners with additional utility savings.

### CLARUM HOMES

Founded in 1994 and headquartered in Palo Alto, California, Clarum Homes is a family-owned development company devoted to building exceptional new home communities and apartments in California. Clarum's mission of building sustainable communities began in 1999 when it began installing solar electric systems in its homes as standard equipment. Clarum Homes is now recognized nationwide as a leader in green building.

#### specifications

CITY: Watsonville, CA

# OF SOLAR HOMES: 177 Single-Family Homes, 80 Townhouses, 132 Apartments

SOLAR PROVIDER: AstroPower

UTILITY: Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)

AVERAGE SYSTEM SIZE: 1.2-2.4 kW

ANNUAL ENERGY PRODUCTION: Estimated 2,550 kWh per home

MODULE TYPE: Sunline™ solar electric power systems

INVERTER: Sharp Sunvista™